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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

30 June 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Current Soviet Policy

SUMMARY

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STAT

A. We believe the basic motivation behind Moscow's current tough line to be its overriding concern over revisionism. This concern has led the USSR to break with Tito and to execute Nagy, - measures intended, at least in part, to place greater pressure upon Gomulka. But we do not believe that the USSR has taken a decision to subdue Poland at whatever cost. Instead, we foresee greater political efforts to obtain Gomulka's compliance with Bloc requirements or perhaps even his replacement.

B. The USSR probably anticipates that Western reactions to its anti-revisionist moves, particularly the Nagy execution,

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have seriously reduced the chances for East-West negotiations favorable to its interests. The recent tactics relative to the Geneva experts' meeting probably represent an attempt to prepare the ground for throwing the onus on the West in the event of a break-off. They do not, however, appear to portend a wholesale abandonment of the "peaceful coexistence" line.

C. It is possible, however, that the explanation of recent events lies deeper, and that they reflect a new and stiffer overall policy toward the West. If this is the case, the emergence of this policy may in turn reflect a power struggle within the Soviet leadership, although there is little evidence that such a struggle is currently under way.

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1. The Campaign against Revisionism. Since the November meetings in Moscow, the Bloc campaign against revisionism has been mounting. But its effectiveness was hampered so long as two logical steps remained untaken. First, until Tito was denounced and read out of the socialist world, it was impossible to demonstrate convincingly that his positions were impermissible to a socialist state. Second, so long as Nagy remained alive, the attitude of complete intolerance toward his crimes was compromised. Both these steps were difficult to take, however, because of the negative effect they would have on the Soviet stance in foreign policy. Another restraining factor possibly was involved: a reluctance on the part of Khrushchev, both for personal and policy reasons, to admit the final failure of his courtship of Tito and of his relatively liberal policy toward the Satellites.

2. The logic of the anti-revisionist campaign would appear to call for yet a third step -- the reduction of Poland to full subordination to the USSR. There is no evidence that Moscow has employed its economic and military weapons against Gomulka. He is obviously placed under great pressure, however, by the actions taken against Tito and Nagy. In resisting this pressure, he retains the same

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assets which prevented Soviet action against him in October 1956: his ability to summon the Polish people to mass resistance, to argue persuasively that only his course will prevent popular violence from erupting spontaneously, and to warn that violence to Poland might spread to East Germany and risk embroilment with the Western powers. Over the last 20 months he has secured the loyalty of the Polish military and security forces. Moreover, he has curbed many of those aspects of the Polish internal scene which are offensive to the USSR and has helped the Soviet Union to build and maintain an image of respectability and tolerance before the uncommitted nations.

3. Against these factors must be set the evidence, implicit in recent Soviet actions, of a deepened Soviet concern over the dangers of revisionism. In addition, the USSR may believe that, with the West unsettled by De Gaulle's advent and preoccupied with the Middle East, the risk of widened conflict arising from its own intervention in Poland would be lessened.

4. We infer from Gomulka's speech of last Saturday that, while he realizes he must prudently pull in his horns, he does not regard Soviet-Polish relations as having reached the stage of an ultimate

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and unavoidable showdown. He neither succumbed altogether to Soviet pressure nor issued a defiant call for popular support. Instead, he strengthened his criticism of Yugoslavia, but retained a tone of sorrow in contrast to the anger shown by all other Bloc statements. He condemned Nagy's behavior, but still pictured him as a weak leader giving way to pressure rather than as an active and long-time conspirator. Most important, he did not endorse the execution, calling it Hungary's internal affair.

5. We do not believe that the USSR has taken a decision to subdue Poland at all costs, using whatever means prove necessary. But we cannot reaffirm that "the USSR's reluctant acceptance of the 'new' Poland... appears to be a long-range adjustment rather than a temporary accommodation."* In view of the intensity of the anti-revisionist campaign and Gomulka's continued foot-dragging, we anticipate stronger Soviet efforts to obtain his compliance or, failing that, perhaps even his replacement. These efforts will in the first instance be political; in addition to pressuring Gomulka and giving increased support to the Natolin (pro-Soviet) faction

* SNIE 12-58, "Outlook for Stability in the Eastern European Satellites", 4 February 1958, paragraph 44.

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in the Polish party, the USSR will probably seek to influence the large group within the Central Committee membership which is conservative, uneasy about the October reforms and anxious to restrict them, but also opposed to full Soviet control.

6. Such a struggle could come to a head in the near future, for example at the July plenum of the Polish Party, if this is held on schedule. On the other hand, it could go on for some months, with the Soviets seeking to erode Gomulka's domestic support and discredit his capacity to improve the lot of the Polish people. We think such an effort is unlikely to meet Soviet designs in any short period and that, if the Soviets really mean soon to reduce Gomulka to the level of other Satellite leaders, a showdown is probable.

7. Implications for Soviet Foreign Policy. We do not believe that recent events indicate that the USSR has ceased to desire a summit conference or a relaxation of international tensions. However, these objectives have been overridden by Moscow's intense concern over its position in Eastern Europe, which they consider must take precedence over non-Bloc affairs. The Soviet leaders probably recognize that their recent moves against revisionism have produced

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serious adverse reactions in the West which may seriously reduce the chances for East-West negotiations on any basis favorable to Soviet interests. Thus they probably anticipate a breakdown of such negotiations and have set out, on previously prepared ground, to place the onus on the West.

8. The Soviet performance with respect to the Geneva experts' meeting is consistent with this interpretation. The USSR has always viewed the US proposal for this conference as a delaying tactic. It accepted primarily in order to avoid the appearance of obstructionism, and has continued meanwhile its efforts to force the West to commit itself to a test ban. The note of 25 June probably was a further gambit in this effort, and, if the conference goes forward, the USSR will probably continue to agitate the issue, both at Geneva and elsewhere.

9. There is a further possibility which cannot be excluded, although we consider it less likely than the one given above. We cannot be certain that Khrushchev's purges have put an end to the view within the Soviet leadership that peaceful coexistence is a dubious tactic which weakens the internal vitality of the Communist movement and that any but the smallest grants of autonomy to the

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satellites are impermissibly dangerous. Persons of this persuasion may feel that, in view of the recent gains in Bloc strength and weaknesses in the capitalist world, victory is assured if only unity can be maintained. The failure of certain of Khrushchev's policies -- courtship of Tito, partial relaxation of controls over Eastern Europe, efforts to force the West into a summit conference on Soviet terms -- may have encouraged a resurgence of this view within the Soviet leadership. If so, it would probably enjoy the support of the orthodox regimes in Eastern Europe as well as that of the Chinese Communists, who appear to be playing an increasing role in the formulation of Bloc policy and to prefer a generally tough line. We think that Khrushchev, if he found that he could not at the moment defeat an opposition group holding such a view, would not hesitate to adopt its policies and, in fact, take the lead in implementing them.

10. But the evidence concerning activities within the Soviet leadership is, as usual, elusive. On the one hand, the published results of the recent CPSU plenum reveal a further step in agricultural reforms associated with Khrushchev and the reinforcement, via the appointment of two new candidate members, of his position within the Presidium. There have been no developments in domestic

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policy paralleling those of last week in Bloc and extra-Bloc affairs. On the other hand, Khrushchev's recent denials of disunity within the Bloc (specifically between Moscow and Peiping on the Tito issue) and in the Soviet party are suggestive of division, as is his extensive defense of his policies in Sofia. The Chinese role is obscure; we think that, although Peiping might contribute to the formulation of Bloc policy, this contribution could not be decisive unless the Soviet leadership were divided. Even in this case, there must be a strong compulsion throughout the Presidium not to call in the Chinese to settle Russian differences.

11. If it is indeed the case that a new line has been forced upon Khrushchev, then the future course of Soviet policy becomes even more uncertain. On its face, such a new line would involve a more permanent shift in tactics toward the non-Communist world than the mere raising of difficulties about the Geneva meeting, and a greater and more immediate threat to Gomulka's position than could be staved off by his recent speech. But any line of policy representing a partial defeat for Khrushchev would be quite unstable, in view of his almost certain subsequent attempts to reassert and insure his

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primacy. Thus policy might undergo a series of zigs and zags flowing from the push and pull of an internal power struggle.

12. It is equally possible that Khrushchev himself may have initiated the current line. As the greatest revisionist of them all, he has to be especially concerned to distinguish sharply between his own revisions and the more radical and uncontrolled ideas labelled "revisionism." How better to underline that only he is permitted to undertake revisions than to break with Tito and execute Nagy? This view is all the more reasonable if Khrushchev has become personally disenchanted with Tito and impatient with Gomulka. In this case, the change in line toward both Poland and the West might be as substantial as in our second hypothesis, but it would still be uncertain in duration, simply because of Khrushchev's tendency to change his mind.

13. We conclude that, at present, the most likely explanation of recent Soviet actions is not that the USSR has either abandoned the entire policy of peaceful coexistence or settled on Gomulka's downfall. Rather Moscow appears to be moving to insure its position

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in Eastern Europe, involving greater pressure upon Poland, and is prepared to take the consequences of a temporary setback in relations with the non-Communist world.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



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